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THE PACIFIC TRIANGLE

BY SYDNEY GREENBIE

AS late as December 8th, 1916, the *Sydney Morning Herald* said editorially: "And *those of us who think of a possible run under America's wings* forget that her strength at present is proportionately no greater than our own (Australia's). She is not ready for either offence or defence and she knows it. This being so, can we ask Great Britain," etc., etc. Another statement which emphasizes this tendency is that made by the late Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. "What do the Colonies ask? They ask a preference on their principal products. You cannot give them—at least it would be futile to offer them—a preference on manufactured goods, because at the present time the exports of manufactures of the Colonies are entirely insignificant. You cannot, in my opinion, give them a preference on raw materials. . . . which are a necessity of our manufacturing trade. . . . Therefore, if you wish to have Preference, if you desire to gain this increase, *if you wish to prevent separation*, you must put a tax on food." (In both cases the italics are mine.)

After the visit of the American fleet to Australia, so cordial was the attitude of Australians that everywhere they talked of floating the Stars and Stripes in the event of—what? In the event of pressure from Downing Street or from Tokyo. The Australian temperament is not one which buries its grievances or harbors ill-feeling. The Australian speaks right out that which is on his mind. And though much must be discounted because of this bubbling personality, almost primitive in its extremes, nothing that affects Australia can long be ignored by us.

Frankly the situation is this. Australia is set in her so-called "White Australia" policy. Australia made it clear to England that, Alliance or no Alliance, she would never swerve from her policy of excluding Japanese and

Chinese. When the American fleet appeared, knowing the Oriental exclusion practiced in America, Australia felt that bond of fellowship which comes from common danger. And everything was done to develop friendship. America became the pattern for everything Australian. Never particularly fond of the Englishman, at times excluding him almost as effectively as the Oriental, advertising that "No Englishman Need Apply" when looking for labor, and even during the war referring to themselves proudly as "Australians, not English," Australia regarded America as a big brother. Afraid of the little yellow man up there, Australia naturally looked to America as a possible defender.

But along came the European war. Great Britain was in danger. America held aloof. Then everything changed. The wave of anti-American sentiment in Australia was much more pronounced than in New Zealand. This is a strange anomaly, for inherently New Zealand is much more imperialistic and emulates the parent country much more than does Australia. Yet anti-Americanism was almost violent in Australia. This is characteristic of these people. There was almost a boycott against American goods. One firm published a scurrilous advertisement which the American Consul-General at Melbourne showed me and said he had sent it home to Washington. For a time it looked rather serious, but in view of the Australian character, its importance is to be discounted. It was merely the impetuosity of a little boy, disgruntled because big brother had not taken his judgment *in toto*. Many said openly: "We were so fond of America and thought she was our friend. From now on we don't want anything from you. We don't want your protection."

At that time Mr. Hughes, the Prime Minister, returned from England with conscription up his sleeve. It is said that he was warned by labor not to try to put it through without a referendum. What happened then illuminates the Australian character. For weeks the country was in as wild a state as pending civil war could produce anywhere. The feeling was tense. Conflicts and wrangling occurred everywhere. Up to the last night of the discussion it seemed as though there would be war. Then came the day of the vote. The quiet and the orderliness was one of the greatest boosts for democracy ever staged. Every-

thing was bathed in sunny restfulness. Workingmen lay upon the grass of the public domain like seals. When they talked it was about anything but conscription. Conscription lost. It lost a second time the year after. Two main factors stood out against the sending of more men to Europe—labor and Asia.

Almost immediately after the referendum the coal strike occurred. The situation became grave. To conserve fuel for industrial purposes, the Government prohibited the use of electricity and gas except during specified hours. Places of business on the main streets were lit with kerosene lamps, movies were closed, the ferry stations stood in semi-darkness. People conversed as though certain doom were impending. Things looked forlorn indeed. Shops and factories were closing down, throwing thousands out of work. One heard remarks about things heading for a revolution.

Australia is reputed to have done wonders in the way of solving the problems of capital and labor, but there are as many strikes in that Commonwealth as in any other state. The country is crystallizing quickly and is bound to become more and more conservative. In spite of the worthy democracy to be found there, every public utterance seemed to bear itself as though made by a lord. One is constantly aware of the presence of the crown even though it has been removed, like the sense of pressure behind one's ears after having taken off one's spectacles. For in spite of its democracy, Australia is bound up in the monarchy. Revolution was heard of every now and then, but at its mention one also heard the creaking of the bones of Empire. It was evident and clear, though hardly spoken. One felt the security which comes from the accumulation of tradition and custom, but it was not comfortable. Even in Australia change seems to be regarded as synonymous with destruction. A marvelous structure, this British Empire, and fit for the residence of any human being—but not an American. He is too dynamic, too restless, too eager for creation.

And here is where we arrive at the point of meeting and of parting in our relations with Australia. America has determined upon keeping the country "white" against the invasion of Asia. So has Australia. But America has the inclusive tendencies of an empire; Australia the exclu-

sive. America is heterogeneous; Australia is homogeneous. American strikes are regarded as importations, but what about the strikes in Australia? America has a population of 110,000,000 in an area but a little larger than Australia, while Australia has only a paltry 4,500,000. America is trying to amalgamate the diverse races it already has without taking in such people as the Asiatics whose racial characters are so unyielding. But Australia is herself unyielding. Homogeneous as her population is, she has great difficulty in keeping it from disagreement. With a vast region not likely to be touched by labor in generations, Australia uses the same arguments against outsiders coming in as does America in regions already well developed.

Keeping Australia "white" is the keynote of all Australian politics. For this reason half of the leaders waged war against Germany; while to keep Australia white, the other half stayed conscription. Labor is at the bottom of the "white" Australia policy. The most serious problem the country has to face is her insufficient population. Yet what labor is to be found there receives no more consideration than anywhere else in the world. It is no better off than elsewhere. There is less poverty simply because poverty is synonymous with over-population. To protect itself against invasion of cheap (not necessarily Asiatic) labor, the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 was passed. To speak of restricting immigration to a country containing only four and a half million seems suicidal, but Australia went at it without any trepidation and declared for the exclusion from "immigration into the Commonwealth of . . . any person who fails to pass the dictation test; that is to say, who, when an officer dictates to him not less than fifty words in any prescribed language, fails to write them out in that language in the presence of the officer." This is the crux of the act; other than that, restriction is placed only on those diseased or incapable. In other words, this restriction places a person failing in the test on a level with the criminal, lunatic and leper. It is obviously a snare, for it means that an officer may spring any language he may choose on an immigrant. He may ask a Frenchman to write Greek, or a Greek Spanish, failure to transcribe which gives the officer the power to exclude the applicant. The law has kept Australia white, but with pallor rather than purity.

Veiled and unveiled, this white Australia policy was at the bottom of the failure of conscription. The spirit which dominated both camps was fear of invasion. Argued the pro-conscriptionist: If we do not stand behind the Empire and the Allies in this war, Prussia or whoever may become her ally in future will swoop down upon us. Argued the anti-conscriptionist: If that is the danger, then let us keep our men at home to protect us against this possible peril. The antis were more open. They pictured an invasion following the sending of men to Europe, and pointed to the importation of coolies for labor in Europe. One member of parliament was fined a thousand dollars and made to enter into "cognisance and comply with the provisions of the Regulation" because he specified whom they were afraid of—Japan. And to add grist to their mill, a hundred natives of the island of Malta (British subjects, mind you) appeared at the beautiful front door to Australia, Sydney Harbor, and asked for admission. They did not land. Even Indians are excluded, a deposit of \$500 being required of any admitted to guarantee his return. A transport had been fitted out in Java with native labor but Australian workers refused to load it till the fittings were torn out and done over again by Australian labor.

Now, the white Australia policy is, if you care to stretch a point, a humane attempt to avoid conflict. The Australians say to themselves and to the world: We would rather call you names across the sea than scratch your eyes or pull your ears over a wooden fence. They point to the American Civil War and the present problem in the south as an example. They wish to save themselves future operations by avoiding the cancer and are willing to bear the burden of retarded development for this promised peace. Let us see how it has worked out.

It is interesting to note that in 1915, 890 Germans were admitted to Australia, and only 423 Japanese; in 1914, 3,395 Germans and 387 Japanese. The number of Germans for the two years previous was practically the same, whereas that of Japanese fluctuated from 698 in 1912 to 822 in 1913, and 387 in 1914. From 1908 to 1915 the Germans entered in increasing numbers, while the Japanese decreased. Chinese gained admission in vastly greater number than the Japanese, exceeding them by 1,500 and

2,000 yearly. On the whole the arrivals over the departures were seldom very excessive, most of the steamers from the south for the Orient being taken up by returning Asiatics. With the vast regions of the island-continent uninhabited and untouched, this movement of Orientals is only evidence of the check the Government keeps on invasion. The fallacy in the "white Australia" policy is obvious. Its psychological significance was pointed to above—a tendency on the part of Australians, though politically democrats, to revert to habits of thought inherited from England. England is an island kingdom, but the Englishman cannot forget this even when he has taken up his home on a vast continent like Australia. In this day and age of steel ships and submarines, with possibilities of the airship clear before us, for anyone to think in an insular way is to lack the common sense of a King Canute. Australia has shown that even with an enemy recognized and fought she has been unable to remain unified in thought, yet she thinks that merely by excluding the Asiatic she will be able to maintain her integrity. Capital in Australia would be willing to admit the Oriental in order to reduce the cost of labor; but as soon as he becomes a factor in commerce—as in the case of the Chinese furniture-makers who exploit Chinese laborers and undersell Australian furniture manufacturers—Capital becomes wroth and shouts for the exclusion of the "coolie." Labor, on the other hand, swaggering about the brotherhood of man and the common cause of labor throughout the world, becomes just as nationalistic when "foreign" labor threatens to undersell it. True that it would be easy enough to establish a minimum wage by law so that no Chinese would be allowed to receive less than that wage for his work, but the principle doesn't work out as easily. Even with a minimum wage and an eight-hour day, the Chinese with his intense application to his job and his manner of living would threaten the white man. But have we not the same difficulty even amongst a given number of white men, where some are ready to undersell others? Australia, the experimental station for labor legislation, is the last country where one would expect to find the exclusiveness which she condemns so vigorously. She has shown herself exclusive in her discrimination of the English workingman; she has been exclusive in her con-

demnation of America in the first days of the war; she has even been exclusive in her attitude toward her neighbor, New Zealand; and finally and foremost she is exclusive of Asiatic and colored people. This exclusiveness has left a continent with barely the fringe of it scratched. To people like the Japanese and Chinese, this must indeed seem the height of selfishness. True, that sparse as her population is, Australia has done more to better the conditions of her people than has Japan. Japan's claims cannot be regarded seriously, for mere breeding is never an argument for expansion. But in the face of this menacing conflict, America and Australia, sharing with each other this attitude of exclusiveness, must know whither they are drifting. We must learn from Australia what she intends to do, and why. We must study Australian temperament and Australian character. Some of her own people said she was a quitter in the war, but that is false. Australia sent 400,000 men to Europe. Would Australia stand by America in an Oriental conflict? Is there going to be a conflict? A military or naval struggle—not necessarily. But the conflict is on. Will it be a struggle for land? Not necessarily. Japan doesn't want to push out. She has all of Manchuria and Korea and Formosa and her own north island, the Hokaido, yet she has lost only about 1,200,000 people by emigration. Japan will not create a commercial menace until she improves the standard of her workmanship, and when she does that her cheap labor will also be a thing of the past. But even then, when Japan has captured by higher grade and more extensive production the markets of the Pacific which Australia, unless she obtains more people, cannot think of approximating, Australia will need to find some way out of her dilemma. She must have more people, but failing to get them, can she maintain her policy of exclusion? The danger is largely a psychological one. Australia will seek the friendship and assistance of America, with whom she is linked by ties of common language and similarity in temperament.

The Pacific presents a problem for the future, colossal and without precedent. We are apt to single out the three great countries—Australia, America and Japan—and think that by studying their natures we can find a solution to the difficulty. But there are in the Pacific an infinite number of other races, in various stages of development. Hawaii

has had an interesting civilization; the Philippines are clamoring for independence; Java is in no sense a barbarous country; and China—well, we are childish in our judgments of people strange to us. Then there is India. Europe was less diverse in any particular than is this conglomeration of marvelous civilizations—yet see what a mess it is in. Australia is almost a homogeneous country—yet see what conflicts rage there. Still, jingoists speak of the yellow peril as though it were a single thing, elemental and conquerable.

Our relations with Australia are definite. The need of understanding is urgent. Just as Japan is beginning to realize that she must make China her friend, so must we—Australia, New Zealand, Canada and America—form a closer union. There should be an exchange of opinion; there should be a greater supply of news distributed from one country to the other. Not special Sunday sections bought and paid for and in unmistakable garb, but news of personal, educational and geographical value. With these three countries as a nucleus and the same thing going on in China and Japan, the problem of the East understanding the West will become more clear, more simplified.

We have first of all to show the East that our form of democracy is acceptable. We must make ourselves the teachers and exemplars of the East. We must show that unity is possible, and that we appreciate the fine points in Oriental civilizations. Commencing with this idea, the programme will work itself out. We must appeal to the East, not condemn it. Our exclusion must be definitely stated as only temporary, to be removed as soon as possible, the earlier the better—to be removed when Japan eliminates from her own conscience the hatred of the foreigner. America has won the friendship of China in just that way. It can be done. By returning the Boxer indemnity to China for educational purposes more was done toward peace in the Pacific than by all the wars in creation, however ideal their motives. Extend that method and we have our new imperialism.

SYDNEY GREENBIE.